



April 1, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
The Honorable Katherine Klausmeier

Vice Chair, Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Beidle and Vice Chair Klausmeier,

I write to you today in full support of *Senate Bill 1188 - Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act*.

In the wake of the tragic Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore last week, I highly commend Governor Wes Moore, the Moore-Miller Administration, and the Maryland General Assembly for quickly taking action to find a way to make those directly affected by this unprecedented event financially whole by introducing this important legislation.

In the immediate aftermath of the bridge collapse and port closure, my thoughts are with the thousands of workers whose livelihoods will be impacted as commerce is likely to halt in the near future while clean up efforts attempt to re-open the obstructed channel for the Port. Through no fault of their own, many of these workers will soon become unemployed and with no clear indication of when they can expect to start earning a paycheck again.

While Maryland has safety net programs in place, the maximum allotment for Maryland Unemployment Insurance is only about \$430 a week, or approximately \$22,000 a year. This amount, while helpful, falls well short of the average salary of a Port employee and will simply not be enough to pay their bills during this work stoppage. It is also important to note that many of these workers are classified as “independent contractors” and thus are ineligible for traditional Unemployment Insurance programs. This further compounds the problem, as these employees’ livelihoods are solely dependent on the flow of goods in and out of the Port. This indefinite work stoppage will mean that these ineligible independent contractors will be left without any means of financially supporting themselves and their families.

For these reasons, this legislation is a vital first step in making sure that we do not leave any of the affected employees behind as we recover from this tragedy and rebuild the Port. By directing the Maryland Department of Labor to establish temporary relief programs for all of these workers, we can help them to survive financially while they weather this work stoppage and ensure that they and their families do not suffer further due to no fault of their own.

I stand in full support of *Senate Bill 1188 - Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act* and I urge you to give this legislation the highest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone", is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

David Trone
Member of Congress